MEDICAL VIRTUES OF FISH.

The Carp and the Tench Are Valuable as Curatives.

Fishing literature, prior to the days and writings of Izaak Walton, opens up points of interest which are unique, says the Brooklyn Eagle. Not the least interesting are the constant references of the early writers to the medical virtues of fish. Of course, many of the salt and fresh water fishes mentioned by the old writers are not recognized in the waters of to-day, but the fresh water perch, carp, tench and eel are yet recognized, and it is in connection with these fish that some of the quaintest ideas as to their medical virtues have prevailed.

In the art of healing the carp plays a respectable part. One old writer speaks of the fat of the carp as being of miraculous powers for the alleviation of "hot rheumatism." The manner of its application was by frequent rubbing on the painful part, and the effect was said to be eminently mollifying and salutary. The triangular bones in the throat of the carp, on being ground to a powder and applied to a wound or bleeding nose, were said to act as styptic. The gall was also said to have been used for sore eyes, and "above the eyes," says an old Aesculapius, "two little bones exist, simi-circular in shape, which are diligently preserved by noble females against the lunatical disease."

The eel has also a respectable medical history. Members of the profession from Galen to the present day recommend it. Hippocrates, however, makes this exception: "This food is forbidden in tabes and diseased spleen." Galen prescribed it in nephritis. The monks of Salermo held the eel in abhorrence. They say, according to Dr. Badham, in their dietetic code, "to live on eels is a sure recipe for spoiling the voice." Pliny also held this opinion but says, also, "singular are they holden to be to cleanse the humors, either cholerick or phlegmatic, likewise to cure the infirmities of the spleen, and only that they be hurtful to the throat and make a man to lose his voice—they be harmless enow."

FARMER AND THE BIRDS.

How the Crops and Trees Are Saved by Insect Eaters.

There was a time when the farmer looked on nearly every bird except the buzzard as his enemy, says the Galveston News. That was in the long ago, when the average man had not given any study to ornithology. The "used-to-be-a-farmer" robbed the nests of quails for the eggs, and killed the birds in droves when he could get them in a line on the ground. The blackbird was an especial object of his dislike, and he did not see any use for the common meadow lark. He despised any bird that picked a grape or a cherry, and sapsuckers and woodpeckers were an abomination in his eyes. If he respected the dove at all it was because he supposed that it was a descendant of the identical dove which brought back a branch to Noah in his ark, and thus saved the world from everlasting flood. He had a cordial and religious hatred of the raven because it disappointed Noah when it was sent out to make inquiries as to the condition of the flood.

But now it has been proved conclusively that the blackbird kills a million worms and bugs in their chrysalis stage—worms and bugs which destroy crops. The redbrid or grossbeak may fly into a crib on a winter's day and steal a grain of corn, but he has killed a thousand enemies of that corn and is entitled to his reward. The agricultural department at Washington declares that the dove is the greatest destroyer of weeds in all nature, since doves consume untold millions of seeds. Anyone who has watched the mocking bird feed its young can have some idea of the number of insects which is required for the brood. Observation and study have only resulted in demonstration of the value of bird life from the cold standpoint of "business." The "has-been" "used-to-be" farmers may not know these things, but the present day farmer and truckman knows them. They know that thousands of trees are saved yearly by the sapsuckers and woodpeckers.

RISKS OF FEATHERED TRIBE.

Birds Liable to as Many Accidents as Other Creatures.

Of all creatures birds are most exempt from liability to accident, yet they not infrequently lose their lives in most unexpected ways, says the New York Post. Once above trees and buildings they have the whole upper air free of every obstacle and though their flight sometimes equals the speed of a railroad train they have little to fear when well above ground. Collision with other birds seems scarcely possible, but it sometimes occurs. When a covey of quail are flushed occasionally two birds will collide, at times meeting with such force that both are stunned. Flycatchers darting at the same insect will now and then come together, but not hard enough to injure either bird. In the English papers a few years ago a rare accident was reported—a heron had spiked itself on one of the pointed iron arms of a cross surmounting a church steeple. Even the smallest and most wonderful of all flyers, the humming bird, may come to grief in accidental ways, as was recently shown by the case of a tiny bird of the ruby-throated variety, which became entangled in the hooks of a burdock burr and died a prisoner before help could free it.

Young phoebes sometimes become entangled in the horse hairs which are used in the lining of the nest. When they are old enough to fly and attempt to leave they are held prisoners or left dangling from the nest. When mink traps are set in the snow in winter owls frequently fall victims, mice being scarce and the bait tempting.

Lighthouses are perhaps the cause of more accidents to birds than any other obstacle they encounter on their nocturnal migrations north and south. Many hundreds are found dead at the base of such structures. The sudden glare is so confusing and blinding as they shoot from intense darkness into its circle of radiance that they are completely bewildered and dash headlong against the thick panes of glass. Telegraph wires are another menace to low-flying birds, especially those which, like quail and woodcock, enjoy a whirlwind and attain great speed within a few yards. Such birds have been found cut almost in two by the force with which they struck the wire.

The elements frequently catch birds unawares and overpower them. A sudden wind or storm will drive coast-flying birds hundreds of miles out to sea and oceanic birds may be blown as far inland. Hurricanes in the West Indies are said to cause the deaths of innumerable birds, as well as other creatures. Small islands are known to have become completely depopulated of their feathered inhabitants from such causes. Violent hailstorms, coming without warning in warm weather, are quite common agents in the destruction of birds and thousands of English sparrows have been stricken in a city during such a storm.

Ruffled grouse have a habit of burrowing deep beneath the snow in winter and letting the storm shut them in. They spend the night in this warm, cozy retreat, their breath making its way out through the loosely packed crystals. But this becomes a fatal trap when a cold rain sets in during the night and an impenetrable crust cuts off their means of escape.

Navigation Exploit.

Exploits in navigation by small boat are extending to Eastern Europe. Simon Strabrovsky, a hardy Russian fisherman of Odessa, has just accomplished the feat of navigating alone a small sailing boat from that port across the Black sea to Constantinople and back, putting in at Constanza and Salina on the return voyage. One peculiarity of the adventure is that Strabrovsky navigated without a compass, declaring that the stars were enough. He received a sum of $1,000 for his exploit.

We Are Growing Larger.

A hundred years ago the average chest measure of men recorded in tailors' books was 36 inches, now it is 38 inches.

QUEER CUSTOMS OF SIAM.

Boys Rise at Dawn to Take Bath—Fishing Favorite Sport.

The Siamese boy rises at early dawn and goes to the river to bathe. He uses no soap, pours the water over his head with a bucket, then plunges in the stream and finally runs about to dry himself if he is not the happy possessor of a towel or its equivalent, says the Montreal Herald.

He takes his breakfast of rice, salt fish and fruit from brass or earthenware vessels, sitting on the floor as he does, and using his fingers in lieu of spoons and forks. After breakfast he has to spend the day in play and sleep, for school inspectors are unknown and schools are both few and inefficient.

Fishing is a favorite sport. A bit of cane, some thread and a worm on a pin will serve quite well enough to capture a few fish out of the thousands that abound in the canals and rivers. At low tide, when the canals that thread the country with an intricate netting of water passages are mere valleys of slimy mud, they go into the oozy dirt and catch prawns with coarse sleeves. These prawns are allowed to ripen in the sun, and when they are sufficiently "high" and spicy they are eaten with a mixture of very strong vinegar and fiery pepper. This is a diet that is said to be stimulating to the appetite. As a change from fishing, they indulge in "mud-balling," the Siamese equivalent for snowballing. Neither children nor adults are fond of active exercise for themselves, but they are keenly excited by the exhibition of physical energy in others, especially if the exhibition is in any way combative. Hence they delight in cock fights.

At night they search for crickets, and, having collected a number, they place them, two and two, in little jars of hard-baked mud and by skillful application of a small piece of wood urge the little creatures to engage in warfare. They also catch "fighting fish." These they feed on mosquito larvae, and then train them to fight. The fish become very pugnacious and are exceedingly skillful in their attempts to dispose of their enemies.

Everybody smokes, from baby to grandfather. The native tobacco is very strong, but European tobacco rolled in lotus leaves makes a cigarette with a flavor that is by no means to be despised.

Siamese girls marry when about 14 and men at 20. When a young man is in love he gets an old woman to propose for him. The proposal is made to the girl's parents, and not to herself. The chances are she has never seen her would-be husband. If the proposal is favorably entertained there are many formalities to be gone through.

The astrologer must be consulted to see what the stars say, for a man who was born in "the year of the rat" would most likely lead a very unhappy life with a woman whose natal year had been presided over by the "dog." A sufficiently large bribe to the astrologer will generally be found to prove that the stars are favorable. Then there is the question of dowry. The young man pays to the bride's parents a certain amount of money called "the price of the mother's milk." This is returned to the bride on the birth of the first child. All gifts and messages between the two young people are conveyed by the parents. They indulge in no courtship and there is no demonstration of affection until after the marriage. The marriage ceremony partakes of the nature of a feast and is attended by a priest, who sprinkles holy water, scatters holy rice and pronounces a holy blessing. A man can have as many wives as he can afford to keep. The first wife, however, is the chief one and the head of the household. There is a very elastic divorce law and marriages can be annulled by mutual consent.

Peculiarities of Eyesight.

When the average man or woman comes to be fitted with the first pair of glasses some curious discoveries are made. Seven out of ten have stronger sight in one eye than the other. In two cases out of five, one eye is out of line. Nearly one-half of the people are color-blind to some extent, and only one pair of eyes out of every fifteen are right in all respects.